

SAF/LLZ (Legislative Research Team)

ROS-LEHTINEN, Ileana (Republican)  
(pronounced: il-ee-AH-na ross-LAY-tin-nen)  
Representative, 18th District, Florida  
Elected (29 Aug 1989) to the 101st Congress  
Reelected to succeeding Congresses



### BACKGROUND

Born: Havana, Cuba – 15 July 1952  
Home: Miami, Florida  
Marital status: Married (Dexter) – 2 children; 2 stepchildren  
Religion: Roman Catholic  
Education: Miami-Dade Community College, A.A., 1972; Florida International Univ, BA, 1975; MS, 1986  
Military: None  
Profession: Teacher; private school administrator  
Political: Florida House, 1982-86; Florida Senate, 1986-98 (first Hispanic woman in both). Elected 29 Aug 1989 in a special election with 53% of the vote to fill the seat of Rep Claude Pepper (D-FL), who had died. Sworn in on 6 Sep 98. She was unopposed in the 1998 and 2000 election. In the 2002 general election, she won with 68% of the vote.

Rep Ros-Lehtinen, the first Cuban-American and first Hispanic woman elected to Congress, is a conservative who focuses on foreign policy as it relates to Cuba. Outspoken in her opposition to easing sanctions against Cuba.

In the 106th Congress, criticized certain actions by the US Coast Guard against certain Cuban freedom seekers. Cosponsored H.R. 3405, the Equality for Israel at the UN. Drew attention to a committee print entitled “The Cuba Program: The Torturing of American POWs by Castro Agents”; discussed some of the experiences of former AF officers while held in captivity by N. Vietnam.

In the 107th Congress, observed that a visit by former President Jimmy Carter to Cuba had been followed by the greatest crackdown on dissidents in Cuban history. During debate on an emerg suppl approps bill, acknowledged that we are facing a new type of enemy: “This is a different world. Our defense must be based on recognition and awareness of the methods, weapons, tactics, and behavior of this new enemy. Our security depends on being prepared to meet these new threats head-on....” Expressed support for federalizing airline screeners. Honored the founder of Wings of Valor who, with help from the Air Force Reserve unit at Homestead, FL, provided humanitarian assistance to the people of Nicaragua. Drew attention to Cuba’s support for terrorist groups and its efforts to expand its biological weapons capabilities and build strong cooperative agreements with Iran and Iraq.

As a result of redistricting, represents Homestead ARB effective with the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress (2003).

Additional: Married to Dexter Lehtinen, US attorney for Miami.  
AF Bases: Homestead ARB

### COMMITTEES

GOVERNMENT REFORM: Subc incl - Criminal Justice, Drug Policy & Human Resources; National Security & Veterans Affairs

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: Subc incl - International Operations & Human Rights - chairwoman; Western Hemisphere